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A CHURCH WEDDING AND KOMSOMOL PROPAGANDA WORK

Staro Maryevka--The procession moved through the entire village.. The bride sat in the front cart with a solemn, sedate air. A large icon swayed over her head. A stout woman, the bride's godmother, held her. Behind the leading cart were two small carts. The bridegroom and his relatives traveled in the second cart, the guests in the third.

The village inhabitants recognized the bride as Young Communist League member Ksenya Dultseva, a worker at the State Grain Procurement Organization's district center. And next to her sat Maria Zadova, assistant secretary of the teachers' Komsomol organization at a secondary school. And, finally, in the third cart, completing the marriage procession, rode Lydia Popova, secretary of the Komsomol organization under the district Komsomol committee.

Word that a Komsomol member was to be married in church flew around the village. The district Komsomol committee also got wind of it.

"What a shame!" grieved the district committee officials, their heads in their hands. "How did we let this happen?"

But shame and desperation soon gave way to anger.

"Punish them immediately!" said Comrade Plotnikova, first secretary of the district committee.

"Expel them all from the Komsomol!" said second secretary Comrade Shvets, making the thought more explicit.

A day later, Maria Zadova and Lydia Popova were hauled over the coals by their fellow Komsomol members. The Komsomol members severely condemned such behavior and unanimously declared the conduct of Zadova and Popova to be incompatible with membership in the Komsomol.

The person most to blame for the church ceremony, Komsomol member Ksenya Dultseva, went on a holiday immediately after her marriage, and nothing was heard from her for about two weeks. Only recently could the Komsomol organization get to the bottom of her case.

Ksenya met her husband, Mikhail Akinin, a stableman on the Stalin Collective Farm, three months ago. They met rarely, and Mikhail never broached the question of marriage. But one October evening he unexpectedly proposed that they should register in marriage. She agreed, and the young couple registered.

And then something happened that Ksenya had not expected. When leaving the registry office, Mikhail proposed that they be married in a church also.

"What do you mean, be married in church?" said the girl apprehensively. "After all, I am a Komsomol member."

"Well, what of it? My mother insists, and I don't want to go against her will."

"But, Mikhail, you must understand--"

"I don't want to understand anything. We'll be married in church. You are no longer Dultseva but Akinina. A wife must heed her husband."

"But I can't do it."

"You can't?" the young husband asked in a challenging tone. "Well, then, you don't have to. I'll always be able to get someone else as good as you."

Next day, when Dultseva came to work, she was very upset. Having failed to persuade her husband, she decided to confide in Grigory Vytryazhko, a Komsomol committee member. He knew Akinin well and promised Ksenya that he would speak to him.

Three days passed. Vytryazhko forgot his promise. Meanwhile the young husband and the mother-in-law stated bluntly: "Either you marry in church on Sunday or we don't want you."

And Dultseva decided to compromise with her conscience.

Her friends and comrades who took part in the religious ceremony also behaved improperly. In addition to Zadova and Popova, the church marriage ceremony was attended by Komsomol members Anna Yelagina, Darya Yezhova, Valentina Nikitina, Pelageya Podzolka, Nina Opivalova and several others.

It may well be asked, how could a group of the district's Komsomol members go to church? What happened in Staro-Maryevka is primarily the result of an incorrect, shallow and careless attitude to ideological work on the part of the district's Komsomol organizations.

The district committee officials have regarded administrative measures as the most effective way to combat survivals from the past such as religion. When checking at the bureau the decisions of the primary units

which had examined the dossiers of the Komsomol members who participated in the religious ceremony, the district officials did not notice the failure to mention those educational measures which Komsomol organizations must take to prevent any repetition of such acts in the future.

The district committee might have been expected to have corrected this error in its decisions and to have pointed out to the Komsomol organizations the need for systematically propagandizing knowledge of the natural sciences among young people. But there was no mention of this in the district committee bureau's decisions, which were all written as though carbon paper had been used. "Expel Komsomol member Ksenya Kultseva and Komsomol member Maria Zadova from the Komsomol for participation in a religious ceremony," "Severely reprimand Komsomol member Lydia Popova" -- a simple enumeration of facts and no conclusions.

This was no accident. The Staro Maryevka District Komsomol Committee does not consider antireligious and scientific propaganda to be its business. Throughout this year, neither the lecture group nor the staff officials nor the district Komsomol committee members have delivered a single lecture or given a single report in the district on antireligious or scientific themes.

The district committee has not used the printed lectures and popular pamphlets available in the rural clubs, reading rooms and libraries to help young people to form a materialist outlook. There are more than 50 such pamphlets on the library shelves in Nadezhdinskoye Village. Among them are pamphlets with such interesting titles as: "Was There a Beginning and Will There Be an End to the World?" "How Is the Universe Organized?" "The Beginning of Life on Earth," "Unusual Celestial Phenomena," "Religious Superstitions and Their Origins" and many others.

We asked Anna Komarova, who is in charge of the library, "Why are these pamphlets covered with dust?"

"Nobody takes them," replied Komarova imperturbably.

"Have you ever tried taking them to the field camps and to the homes of the collective farm workers?"

"No, I never thought of that."

It came to light in the conversation that Comrade Komarova had not even read them herself.

District Komsomol officials have often visited Komarova at the library, but none of them have suggested to the librarian how literature

on natural science should be propagandized among the people.

Propagandizing natural science among young people, forming an advanced, materialist outlook in the rising generation and combating every type of superstition and religious belief make up a most important sector in the fight for the communist education of youth. Officials of the Staro-Maryevka District Komsomol Committee have forgotten this and are now reaping the bitter harvest.